Mr. Speaker, I have to indicate what an inspiring talk

that was that the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. Shays) has provided

this body and those who all may be tuned in. It was very touching,

extremely informative, and most helpful; and it was a pleasure to hear.

As I think about some of the comments that have been said in recent

days regarding the Iraqis and the Iraqi government and those people who

are trying to become a self-governing people, I am struck and I am

brought back, as the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. Shays) was, back

to the days of this country's battle for independence, and all the

naysayers that were around. It is estimated that perhaps less than a

third were actually those who were actively involved in seeking

independence and truly believed in the cause.

Having been in Iraq earlier this year, after the January elections,

having seen what the Iraqis were getting a glimpse of, it is like being

a teacher and seeing the light come on with a student. They get it.

They understand. Make no mistake, there are corrupt people in Iraq just

as there are in America. There have been elections stolen in America.

There have been, I am sure, improper voters everywhere there has ever

been a vote. But this is truly an awesome historic time.

Could it fail in Iraq? It sure could. Could it fail for sure if we

abandon what has been done in the cause for which so many have already

given their lives? It sure could. It could fail. And it is

heartbreaking when people say, let us just get out before the job is

done and let us just get out, meaning that those people who laid down

their lives in service to this country, in helping to spread freedom

and fighting insurgency and terrorists in other streets so we do not

have those fights here in this country, we will, we have, but the major

battles have been overseas because the terrorists get it.

They understand once the seed of democracy begins to bloom in the

Middle East, then it grows and it spreads seeds that then grow up and

democracy spreads because once people get that glimpse of self-

government it is an incredible thing. Just like John Adams wrote his

wife, Abigail, and explained, the thing that philosophers through the

ages have talked about, this idea that people could govern themselves

is just within our grasp. Oh, to be living in this time when it is so

close within our grasp.

Well, we have been the beneficiaries of that. As I spoke to people in

Iraq one gentleman, tears began to come as he talked about how brutal

and barbaric it had been in Iraq under Saddam and how because of

Saddam's spies that were everywhere, neighbors could no longer trust

neighbors. They could not speak what they thought without worrying

about somebody turning them in. They could not make anybody mad in the

neighborhood because then somebody might enter a false report to get

them arrested just out of spite. Even the spies had to be careful

because they

were spied on by others. And so it was a paranoid area.

He said neighbors for years had quit speaking to neighbors out of

this kind of fear and paranoia, but it was not just paranoia. There

were really people out to get them in order to move up. I know having

spent a summer in the Soviet Union, it was the Soviet Union when I was

there back in 1973. I had asked one of the Soviet students when

somebody rushed out of a room, I said, Where is that person going? He

said, She is going to tell on me because in your country maybe money

helps advance you, but in my country the only way you get anywhere is

to step on other people on the way up.

That is the way it was in Iraq. You stepped on other people to move

forward, and it was a terrible time to live in. And this man, as tears

welled up, he said on the day of the election neighbors that had not

spoken for years, they came out, they held hands and they walked to the

polls together to vote.

Now, anybody that would seek to demean the great things that have

already been accomplished that has put the self-government within these

people's grasp so that the seed of democracy might grow and flourish

and develop and spread to the surrounding countries, is just

intolerable. There are great things that have occurred. There are

people who have laid down their lives so this could happen. There are

people who have laid down their lives in service to this country. There

are people that have been wounded and hurt. And as the speaker said, we

have visited those people, we have been with families at funerals and

it is heartbreaking. But there is a seed of freedom and democracy and

the potential for self-government that has been granted.

Now, comparisons continue even tonight to be made by a colleague

across the aisle who wants to compare this to Saigon. This is not

Vietnam. Iraq is not Vietnam. It is completely different. That advisory

action where we had advisors in Vietnam that was escalated by President

Kennedy and then escalated further into a full war even though it was

called police action by President Johnson, and then was ultimately,

even though he is no hero of mine, President Nixon did get us out of

Vietnam. I am not pleased with the way it was done, but people were

made to die for nothing. But they did not die for nothing. They died

for the ideal that man was created by their creator with God-given

rights. They did not die for some wishy-washy government in Washington.

Now, this election in Iraq and what is going on over there is

historic. It is awesome. It is being done by valiant people to demean

what has been done and the lives that have been sacrificed, even by

Iraqis, is simply inappropriate, excessive political exuberance at the

cost of truth, honesty and dignity.

Now, the naysaying brutality that is being heard verbalizing this

idea that we should have our head in the sand is simply inappropriate.

I was grilled by some Al-Jazeera reporters. They said, You must have

been upset by the January elections. Your candidate was not elected. I

said, We were not here about a president. We were here about a process,

that you would govern yourself, and you would select your own

president.

It is not about a president. It is about a process. And they began to

see.

And some of the Sunnis had said, you know, we were told by our

leaders not to vote; that, for one thing, the vote would not come off

because of all the violence, and we saw that did not happen. People did

vote anyway. We were also told it would be a fraud, that the Americans

would use this as a way to install their puppet government. But that

did not happen. The guy that was most friendly to the United States got

third place. We saw, wow, this was a real election and we missed it. We

are not going to let that happen again.

And even though it may not have been a majority of the Sunnis, the

Sunnis bravely came out and voted. And they voted knowing even still

their religious leaders were speaking against it.

I was able to relate to the Al-Jazeera and some of the Iraqis present

with a story that can be depicted in the beautiful huge portrait

outside this very floor of the Constitutional Convention with Chairman

Washington standing there. The story that was told was of Benjamin

Franklin sitting there, as depicted in his chair at the Constitutional

Convention after they had come up with a document, finally. And he

said, you know, I have been looking at that half of a sun engraved on

the back of your chair trying to decide through the process of this

convention if that was a rising sun or that was a setting sun, and now

I believe it is a rising sun. And I related to the Iraqi reporters, I

believe what I am seeing in this country is a rising sun.

It is an incredible day in the history of mankind that in the area

where many believe the cradle of mankind existed, where mankind

started, for the first time in thousands of years that area is about to

govern themselves. We have done a great thing.

There are things that I have heard right here on this floor that I

might disagree with our President over, but I thank God that he has

stayed the course. Because if the seed of freedom and self-government

is allowed to grow and flourish in Iraq, it will spread with other

seeds. We are already seeing that, as the gentleman from Connecticut

pointed out, in surrounding areas, if we stay the course long enough to

let them take over, let them govern. We have trained their policemen.

We are training their soldiers, and they are nearly ready to take over.

What a glorious day that will be for them. They are not going to agree

with us on many things, but they will be a free people and they will

understand that freedom.

I thank God that in the late 1700s, 1776 to 1789, that the naysayers

that said how stupid this was, that those in France who were the

naysayers to this gentleman, Lafayette, who really saw something in the

potential for these colonies in America, I thank God, the very God we

see inscribed above the Speaker's chair, where it says ``In God we

trust,'' I thank that God that the naysayers did not prevail; that the

naysayers, those with their heads in the sand, the negative people,

that they did not prevail. Thank goodness that freedom won out.

And I am praying to that same God that it prevails in the Middle

East, despite the naysaying of those who would be heard even in this

body itself. And, Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to have had the

opportunity to have addressed this issue this evening.